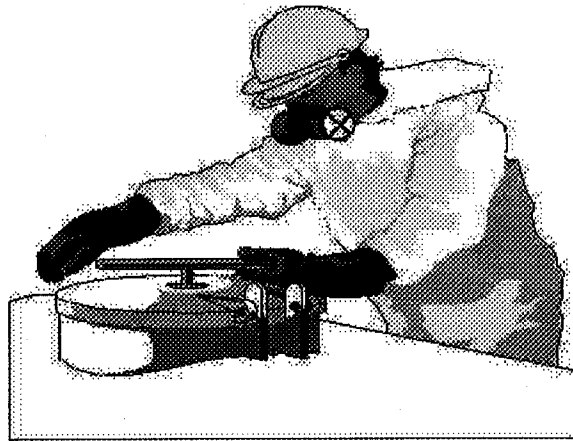


EPA Hazardous Waste Enforcement

"Actions Today to Protect Tomorrow"



EPA Enforcement Means Protection from Hazardous Waste

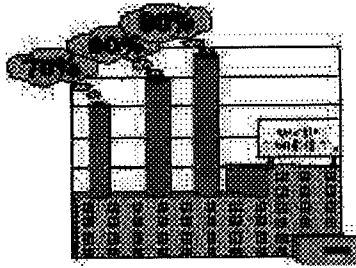
Think of some of the most ordinary things around your house: your children's toys, your books and magazines, plastic food storage containers, your backyard deck, the ink in your pen, bicycles, household cleaning products, and nail polish remover. What do all of these things have in common? When these and many other useful everyday products (or some of their components) are manufactured, oftentimes dangerous and harmful waste can also be created.

What happens to these toxic wastes? If they were dumped on the ground, they could seep into rivers and streams and eventually end up in our drinking water. The wastes could contaminate our food, animals and plants. The hazardous fumes could go into the air and people living nearby where the wastes were dumped could breathe them. Exposure to hazardous wastes can result in serious illnesses, an increased risk of cancer, birth defects, and even death.

This is what happened in places like Love Canal, New York and Times Beach, Missouri. These places became famous because the hazardous wastes and materials that were dumped on the ground or into a hole, stream, lake, or whatever was convenient created real risks to people and the human environment. These dangerous places and many others like them threaten the lives of those who live and work around them, and their cleanup costs the country billions of dollars.

Unfortunately, the dangers of hazardous waste are not limited to large dumpsites and "midnight" dumpers. Even seemingly innocent situations can have serious, even life-threatening consequences: In one recent case in Florida, two children were killed when they were playing near a dumpster in their neighborhood where hazardous waste had been thrown in with ordinary garbage.

The Congress enacted the Resource Conservation Recovery Act (or "RCRA") to prevent future Love Canals. But it can only work when its system of protections are followed. That's the job of enforcement and compliance.



What is Hazardous Waste?

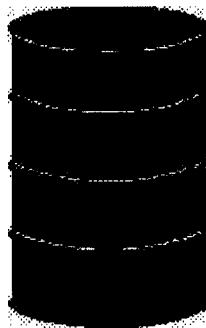
Hazardous waste is anything which is discarded that, because of its quantity, toxic concentration, or physical, chemical, or infectious characteristics is too dangerous to send to the local landfill or into the municipal sewer system. Hazardous waste is considered dangerous because:

- it **may pose a substantial threat** to human health or the environment when improperly treated, stored, transported, or disposed of, or otherwise managed or;
- it **may actually cause** or significantly contribute to an increase in serious irreversible or incapacitating illness, or even death

This means that hazardous wastes can cause cancers such as liver, pancreas, stomach, lung, skin, testicular, and other potentially cancer causing mutations. Hazardous wastes may cause other serious illnesses such as birth defects in newborns, liver damage, anemia, skin rashes, sterility, lung damage, and loss of memory. Hazardous wastes may also cause serious harm to the environment around us, killing or harming animals and plants that play important parts in our daily lives.

Who Makes Hazardous Wastes?

Many industries generate hazardous wastes during the manufacture of their products. They may be large factories, or small local companies. For example, industries that manufacture plastics, wood products, chemicals, paints, petroleum products, metals, and many other products all generate hazardous wastes. Large and small companies which use many of these products, such as print shops, gas stations, dry cleaners, and others may also create dangerous wastes.

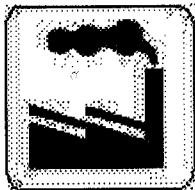


There are many hundreds of other types of businesses in all parts of the country, in rural areas and in urban ones, in industrial parts of town and in neighborhoods, which produce hazardous and toxic wastes, as well as treat, store, and dispose of these wastes. The highways, rail lines, and roads are all used to ship hazardous wastes. All of these companies and transporters need to carefully manage their wastes in a way that are safe for humans, animals, and the environment.

How EPA Protects Your Health

Under our nation's hazardous waste laws, EPA acts to ensure the safe treatment and disposal of hazardous wastes. RCRA's "cradle-to-grave" system for managing hazardous waste requires that those who produce waste handle it properly, and to prepare notifications (called "manifests") to track the wastes when they are shipped for treatment, recycling, or disposal. Those who transport wastes must make sure that the waste is properly contained

and labeled, and that precautions and plans are in place in case of a spill. Those who treat, store, or dispose of hazardous wastes must meet a number of stringent requirements to minimize the threat of harm from their activities, including groundwater monitoring, safe storage requirements, and a ban on the dumping of untreated wastes on the land.



Because of the serious risks to human health or the environment when these wastes are handled or stored in unsafe ways, burned, or illegally dumped, EPA enforcement of the nation's hazardous waste laws works to protect you, your family, and your health.

What Has Enforcement Done?

One recent enforcement case illustrates how EPA enforcement uses the nation's primary hazardous waste law to attack ongoing pollution in our communities. Kodak -- owner of the largest manufacturing facility in the Northeast -- had been discharging hazardous wastewater through an old, leaking sewer system which was never intended to handle hazardous wastes. The waste eventually contaminated the Genessee River. Kodak is now inspecting, repairing and upgrading the estimated 31 miles of aging and leaking industrial sewers at the facility, and is undertaking a number of additional projects that will have a significant beneficial impact on the water quality of the Genessee River and on air quality in northwestern New York.

Another benefit from EPA's enforcement case is Kodak's commitment to reduce hazardous wastes: The aggregate reduction is expected to exceed 2.3 million pounds of pollutants by the year 2001. A fundamental component of EPA's enforcement efforts is the prevention and reduction of pollution in the environment: by reducing or eliminating the creation of dangerous wastes, future health and safety risks are also reduced and eliminated.

Another significant health and safety concern involves the burning of hazardous waste. Hazardous wastes burned in combustion units often contain toxic organic chemicals, heavy metals, and chlorine and chlorides, all of which can harm human health if released to the environment in sufficient quantities. In late 1994, EPA took a series of enforcement actions designed to minimize the risks from hazardous waste combustion from activities that lead to the emission of excessively high levels of dangerous chemicals which could result in unsafe burning and excessive emissions and hazardous residues. EPA's vigorous enforcement efforts notified the public and industry that we expect strict compliance with hazardous waste combustion requirements.

Who Should You Call?

If you have questions about hazardous waste enforcement or if you want to report possible illegal dumping, you can contact your state environmental protection agency, or one of EPA's Regional Offices in the following cities: Boston (617) 565-3400, New York (212) 637-3000, Philadelphia (215) 597-9814, Atlanta (404) 347-4728, Chicago (312) 886-3000, Dallas (214) 665-2100, Kansas City (913) 551-7976, Denver (303) 293-1616, San Francisco (415) 744-1001, or Seattle (206) 553-0479.

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*For More Information Contact Your Local EPA Regional Office or
The RCRA Hazardous Waste Hotline (1-800-424-9346)*

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